

CLAIMS

1. A real time sales support method comprising:
automatically monitoring an interaction between a sales agent and a customer;
determining one or more contexts of the interaction;
based on the one or more contexts, automatically retrieving stored information relevant to the interaction; and
providing the retrieved information in an electronically presentable format to the sales agent to be shared with the customer.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein determining one or more contexts of the interaction comprises:
identifying a geographic context of the interaction between the sales agent and the customer; and
retrieving the information based in part on the geographic context.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein identifying the geographic context comprises estimating a geographic location of the sales agent and the customer on a retail sales floor.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein automatically retrieving stored information comprises:
based on the geographic location of the sales agent and the customer,
retrieving information about products for sale near the geographic location on the retail sales floor.
5. The method of claim 4 wherein automatically retrieving stored information further comprises:

detecting context-identifying keywords among spoken words of the sales agent and the customer;
based on the context-identifying keywords, retrieving additional information about the products for sale near the geographic location on the retail sales floor.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein automatically monitoring the interaction comprises non-obtrusively detecting spoken words of at least one of the sales agent and the customer, and wherein determining one or more contexts of the interaction comprises detecting context-identifying keywords among the spoken words to identify a current context and linking the current context to stored information relevant to the interaction.

7. A real-time sales support method comprising:
at a processing device, detecting signals representative of speech of a conversation between a sales agent and a customer;
at the processing device, decoding the speech to detect context keywords in the speech of the conversation;
in response to detection of a context keyword, accessing a memory to retrieve information pertinent to a context-related informational need of the customer; and
transmitting data from the processing device to a display device, the data producing an audio or video presentation of the retrieved information to supplement the conversation between the sales agent and the customer.

8. The method of claim 7 further comprising:
at a microphone carried by the sales agent, detecting at least portions of the conversation between the sales agent and the customer and
producing electrical signals in response thereto to identify a context of the conversation;

wirelessly transmitting information about the produced electrical signals to a computer carried by the sales agent.

9. The method of claim 6 further comprising:
processing the information at the processing device of the computer carried by the sales agent; and
producing the audio or video presentation on a display of the computer carried by the sales agent.
remotely to the processing device;

10. The method of claim 8 further comprising:
wirelessly transmitting a context-specific query to a server from the computer carried by the sales agent;
based on the query, at the server retrieving the information from the memory; and
wirelessly transmitting a context-specific response based on the retrieved information from the server to the computer carried by the sales agent.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising:
receiving radio signals at one or more locations from the computer carried by the sales agent;
at the server, based on the received radio signals, identifying a geographic context of the computer carried by the sales agent; and
retrieving the information based in part on the geographic context.

12. A real-time sales support tool comprising:
a data processing system;
a display system;
an audio input device which detects at least part of a conversation between a sales agent and a customer;

programming code operational with the data processing system to detect context-identifying keywords of the conversation and to retrieve from storage information based on the context-identifying keywords;

programming code operational with the data processing system and the display system to produce an audio or video presentation of the retrieved information to supplement the conversation between the sales agent and the customer.

13. The real-time sales support tool of claim 12 further comprising:
a portable computer including the data processing system and the display system, the portable computer configured to be carried by the sales agent;

a headset in data communication with the portable computer and including the audio input device, the headset configured to be worn by the sales agent during the conversation between the sales agent and the customer.

14. The real-time sales support tool of claim 12 further comprising:
a radio circuit to communicate context-specific queries to a server and to retrieve context-specific responses from the server, the context-specific queries being based on the context-identifying keywords, the context-specific responses including the information retrieved from storage at the server.

15. A just-in-time learning tool comprising:
an input/output device to generate signals representative of spoken words of one or more parties to a conversation;
a speech server wirelessly coupled with the input/output device to receive the signals and to identify specified conversational cues among the

spoken words of the conversation to identify a current informational need of a party to the conversation; and
a data store coupled to the speech server to retrievably store information of potential interest, specific information relevant to the current informational need being retrievable from the data store upon identification of the specified conversational cues, the specific information being provided substantially in real time from the data store to the input/output device to inform the party to the conversation.

16. The just-in-time learning tool of claim 15 wherein the input/output device comprises one of:

a tablet personal computer,
a personal digital assistant, and
a wireless telephone.

17. The just-in-time learning tool of claim 15 wherein the speech server comprises one or more grammars, the one or more grammars defining the specified conversational cues and the associated specific information relevant to the current informational need stored in the data store.

18. A collaboration method for a sales agent and a customer, the collaboration method comprising:

at a computing device portable by the sales agent during an interaction with the customer, receiving information about a conversation between the sales agent and the customer from an audio input device;
identifying a plurality of contexts of the conversation based on the information;
based on the plurality of contexts, identifying information that might be relevant to the customer; and

displaying the identified information on a display associated with the computing device for use by the sales agent in identifying purchase requirements of the customer.

19. The collaboration method of claim 18 further comprising:
transmitting signals based on the information about the conversation to a remotely located server;
at the server, processing the signals to determine a conversational context;
and
retrieving the information that might be relevant to the customer based on the conversational context from a database associated with the server.

20. The collaboration method of claim 19 further comprising:
locating the computing device on a sales floor;
based on the location of the computing device, determining a geographic context; and
retrieving the information that might be relevant to the customer based on the geographic context from the database.

21. The collaboration method of claim 18 further comprising:
detecting conversational prompts spoken by the sales agent;
in response to the conversational prompts, providing the information that might be relevant to the customer.